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## **I & A Settlement Conferences Set for San Bernardino**

In an effort to deal with the backlog of requests for permanent disability summary ratings, the Division of Workers' Compensation has scheduled a series of informal settlement conferences at the San Bernardino District Office November 17 and 18 and at the same office on December 1, 2, 8 and 9.

This is a pilot program in which DWC Information and Assistance Officers will assist unrepresented workers and the claims adjusters representing their employers or employers' insurance carriers to agree on a settlement in a permanent disability case without having to wait for a summary rating to be issued.

The cases all involve injured workers whose medical conditions have been determined to be permanent and stationary by a Qualified Medical Evaluator (QME) and who are awaiting a rating of their disability by the DWC Disability Evaluation Unit (DEU).

At the informal settlement conferences, the two resident Information and Assistance Officers from the San Bernardino Office, along with I & A Officers from other district offices in the Southern California area, will review the QME reports and other documents on file with the DEU and self ratings furnished by the claims administrators. They will then provide mediation and consultation services to help the parties agree upon an equitable permanent disability rating of the injury so that they can move on to settle the case by Compromise and Release or Stipulation. DEU staff will be available at the conference for technical expertise, if needed. =

If the parties agree on a settlement which the I & A Officer deems reasonable, the documents will be forwarded to a settlement workers' compensation judge for final review and approval.

This innovative approach will not only help insure the prompt provision of benefits to unrepresented workers and expedite the resolution of cases to the

advantage of both parties, but also help reduce a current backlog of requests for summary ratings from the Disability Evaluation unit.

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